



City of Minneapolis
Community Planning & Economic Development
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PLAZA STANDARDS

Standards governing plazas are established to promote year-round gathering places designed to maximize pedestrian access, interaction and visibility, reinforce public spaces, create community identity, promote public safety, and visually enhance development.

Plaza. An exterior open space designed for community gathering that is primarily hardscaped and accessible to the public, fronting along a public street, public sidewalk, or public pathway. Plazas shall include those on privately-owned property, public property and public right-of-way intended for active or passive use by the general public for circulation, seating, or activity space.

535.810. Development standards for all permitted plazas. All plazas shall be subject to the following standards:

(1) *Placement.*

- a. The placement of plazas shall not detract from and shall enhance natural surveillance and visibility of adjacent spaces and public sidewalks and facilitate pedestrian access and circulation.
- b. Plazas shall be designed to maximize interaction with occupants of adjacent buildings and uses.

(2) *Access.*

- a. All plazas shall be designed to allow for pedestrian and bicycle access through and/or around the plaza.
- b. Multiple access points shall be provided for each plaza, with one access point being connected to a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.
- c. All plazas shall be designed in accordance with the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- d. Unobstructed walkways a minimum of four (4) feet in width shall connect the plaza to an entrance of any building on the same zoning lot.
- e. When adjacent to a transit stop, said transit stop shall be integrated into the design of the plaza.

(3) *Natural surveillance and visibility.* Plazas shall be designed to control and guide movement

through the site, promote natural observation and maximize opportunities for people to observe adjacent spaces and public sidewalks .

(4) *Aerial obstructions.* Plazas shall be unobstructed to the sky except for seating, arbors, trellises, kiosks, lighting, water features, public art and landscaping. Up to thirty (30) percent of the plaza area may include umbrellas, awnings or an arcade.

(5) *Surface materials.* With the exception of landscaped areas, plazas shall be surfaced with durable and decorative materials, including but not limited to pervious pavers, decorative pavers, stamped concrete, colored concrete, or brick.

(6) *Seating.*

- a. A minimum of one (1) linear foot of seating shall be provided for each fifty (50) square feet of plaza area.

- b. A minimum of twenty (20) percent of the required seating shall consist of fixed seating. A minimum of twenty (20) percent of the required seating shall consist of seating with backs.
 - c. A minimum of two different types of seating shall be required. Seating may take on multiple forms, including traditional and non-traditional seating, provided that it is accessible and all other seating requirements of this section are met.
 - d. All seating must be of appropriate ergonomic design.
 - e. Seating provided for sidewalk cafes or other adjacent uses shall not count toward the minimum seating requirement of this ordinance.
- (7) *Encroachments and setbacks.*
- a. Plazas shall not encroach into the public right-of-way without the property owner first obtaining an encroachment permit.
 - b. All seating, water features, arbors, trellises, trash receptacles or other accessory equipment and furnishings shall comply with the minimum yard requirements of the zoning district in which they are located.
- (8) *Plantings.*
- a. Plazas shall provide a minimum of one (1) tree for each one thousand (1,000) square feet of plaza area. If proposed as part of a project that has a general landscaping requirement, trees located in the plaza shall contribute toward compliance with the general landscaping requirement
 - b. A landscaped area equivalent to ten (10) percent of the total plaza area may be provided in lieu of trees
- (9) *Additional amenities.* Plazas must provide at least one of the following additional amenities. Plazas in excess of five thousand (5,000) square feet shall provide a minimum of two (2) of the following additional amenities:
- a. *Living wall.* Provide a living wall on at least one building façade directly fronting on the plaza. The living wall shall be composed of panels that total a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the wall area on the building façade. A portion of the plantings shall provide greenery year round, if possible.
 - b. *Water feature,* including but not limited to, fountains, reflecting pools, children’s play features and waterfalls. Water features shall be designed and maintained for year-round functionality and aesthetics.
 - c. *Art feature.* Art shall strive to promote quality design, enhance a sense of place and be maintained in good order for the life of the plaza. The art shall be located where it is highly visible to the public. The art shall be valued at not less than one-fourth (.25) of one (1) percent of the capital cost of the principal structure.
 - d. *Moveable chairs.* Such chairs shall be equivalent to twenty-five (25) percent of the minimum seating requirement. Moveable chairs may be removed during the nighttime hours of 8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
 - e. *Game tables and associated seating.* A minimum of two (2) game tables and associated seating shall be provided.
 - f. *Kiosk.* Such kiosk may be no greater than one hundred (100) square feet in area and may only be occupied by uses permitted in the underlying zoning district.
 - g. *Public drinking fountain.* Such public drinking fountain shall be visible from an adjacent public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.
 - h. *Stormwater functionality.* Provide capacity for infiltrating stormwater generated onsite. Such stormwater amenity may be counted as two amenities if done in an artistic and educational manner.
- (10) *Lighting.* All plazas shall be illuminated in accordance with Chapter 535, Regulations of General Applicability.

- (11) *Winter use.* Plazas shall be designed for winter use and relate to the built form with consideration given to elements such as providing shelter from winds, utilizing seasonally appropriate materials, maximizing access to sunlight and providing for snow and ice removal. Plazas should be located so that they receive natural sunlight during daytime hours in all seasons.
- (12) *Trash receptacles.* A minimum of one trash receptacle and one recycling receptacle shall be provided for each two thousand (2,000) square feet of plaza area.
- (13) *Mechanical equipment.* All exhaust vents and mechanical equipment located adjacent to a plaza shall be screened in accordance with the required screening provisions of Chapter 530, Site Plan Review.
- (14) *Maintenance required.* All plazas shall be maintained in good order by the property owner for the life of the plaza. Proper maintenance shall include, but not be limited to, snow and ice removal, annual maintenance of vegetation and green space and annual inspection and repair and/or replacement of furnishings. Minimum landscaping and seating requirements shall be maintained for the life of the plaza. All adjacent streets, sidewalks and pathways shall be inspected regularly for purposes of removing any litter found thereon.
- (15) *Downtown districts.* Projects seeking a floor area ratio premium in a downtown district by providing an outdoor urban open space shall comply with all requirements of this section and the requirements of the outdoor urban open space premium as specified in Chapter 549, Downtown Districts.